

Adventure, Realism, Romance and Humor

"Kitty Canary."

KITTY CANARY, the very young person, who tells the story of Kate Langley Bosher's new book, which is named after her, says: "I am going to write books that sell, write what people want to read—things that make them forget for a few moments that at times this world is but a fleeting show and there is a good deal of rot in it"; and this is just what Mrs. Bosher has made her do.

Kitty Canary goes to a little Southern town, and while she is busy making everybody extraordinarily happy she decides to marry her original lover, as we have known she would from the moment we opened the book.

But the story doesn't matter much—it is the series of clever descriptions of people that we relish, as well as the quick little epigrams: "I don't suppose a man ever gets over a real case of pink and white," in speaking of an extremely youthful love affair, for an example.

There is a family resemblance between Kitty Canary and Pollyanna; in the Southern phrase they "take after each other"; but Kitty Canary is more human and she doesn't last long enough to become tiresome. The story is quickly and pleasantly told, with several lovable characters aside from the heroine, "dear angelic Miss Susanna," for instance, with whom Kitty spends the summer during which the story is written and "who is so worn out with boarders and their special kind of human nature horridness at times that she's hardly got body enough to cover her soul."

Kitty Canary is one of the books that sell. It makes no pretence of being anything that it isn't and will give a great deal of innocent pleasure.

KITTY CANARY. BY KATE LANGLEY BOSHER. Harper and Brothers. \$1.

"The Best in Life"

MOST women will find *The Best in Life* interesting reading. It is the story of a girl who, in spite of every handicap, dreams of achieving "the best in life"—which to her is social position and wealth and the love of a worthwhile man.

Isael Dark arrives at her goal by a rather crooked path, but by some subtle method the author induces a sympathetic attitude in the reader toward the petty deceptions the girl constantly indulges in. You attribute her lies to an excess of imagination rather than to essential dishonesty of character, and you are so eager to see her "arrive" that many things are forgiven.

Isael is the daughter of an aristocratic wastrel father and a highly romantic Jewish mother, who implants the germ of a belief in a better destiny in Isael. The series of accidents that lead the girl to her goal are told with a fair degree of plausibility; the conversations throughout the book are extremely bright and natural and there are enough complications to keep one guessing until the satisfactory end—rather the inevitable end: "Like a tired child she slipped down into the arms that closed about her."

THE BEST IN LIFE. BY MURIEL HINK. John Lane Company. \$1.50.

"Comrades."

IT is a brave woman who dares to take us into the scenes of actual fighting with her hero and let us be with him as he wins the Victoria Cross. Most of them keep us behind the lines or in other countries, where we are allowed only a vicarious excitement, or, at best, we content ourselves with hospital scenes, but Mary Dillon, who will be remembered as the author of *The Rose of Old St. Louis* and *In Old Bellaire*, has, in her *Comrades*, denied us no possible thrill.

Hugh Hatfield of Hatfield Abbey, England, whom we see first at diplomatic studies in Germany and subsequently in service in Italy, volunteers at the out-

break of the war, is wounded, captured and sent to America, after a most remarkable escape, to buy horses.

He returns to England on the ill fated Lusitania.

He had fallen in love while in Germany with Beatrice Ludlow, a beautiful Kentucky girl, and fate brought them together time after time in Italy, at the front, where Beatrice was driving an ambulance. After he had despaired of finding her in America he met her on the Lusitania.

They are both saved, she in a lifeboat and he on a convenient table, and, having married, they resume their duties at the front, where we leave them.

COMRADES. BY MARY DILLON. The Century Company. \$1.40.

"Boy Woodburn."

IT is really a pleasure these days to come across a new novel which deals with horses and the turf. In *Boy Woodburn*, which is the latest book to come from Alfred Ollivant's pen, the horse is king once more, and the joys and sorrows, the victories and defeats, the intriguing and the fair play of the turf are once more the pivot around which the plot of the story unfolds.

Boy Woodburn is the daughter of a quaint old character, Mat Woodburn, a successful trainer. Boy's mother is the daughter of an itinerant preacher and she never goes near a racetrack. But she knows as much about a horse as does Mat, and mothers all the stock as she mothers her family.

Boy lives a boy's life in the stables and cherishes one secret dream, to ride the national winner. She apparently does, although the reader is left in pleasing uncertainty as to just who did pilot the big brown outsider, Four-Pound-the-Second, to victory on that notable occasion when America had sent over a horse that was to make the English stables look very ill.

The story of Four-Pound-the-Second's upbringing is a tale of racing intrigue and jealousy. There is a slowly unfolding love story too. Mr. Ollivant individualizes each animal just as successfully as each human in the story.

BOY WOODBURN. BY ALFRED OLLIVANT. Doubleday, Page & Co. \$1.40.

"The House of Conrad."

ELIAS TOBENKIN has achieved in *The House of Conrad* an extraordinarily sincere and realistic piece of fiction. One will seek far to find a narrative which proceeds more inevitably than does this story of the immigrant Conrads, with his impassioned dream of the "House" he would establish in the new world.

Impregnated with the doctrines of Lassalle, Conrad determines to found in America a community that will be a centre of radical thought and activity to combat every form of oppression, injustice and narrowness in the world that surrounds them. The House of Conrad is to be a flaming torch in a dark place—he and his children are to be the means of securing a brighter, juster life for suffering humanity.

Poor Conrad (as America calls him)! It is a struggling, suffering life enough that awaits him. Every inch of the way he finds forces stronger than himself combating the fulfilment of his audacious dream.

America exerts a potent influence on her own that seems to threaten the destruction of his project. From the moment an Irish neighbor changes the name of his son, so impressively christened Ferdinand Lassalle, to the more familiar "Fred," until after a long life of incredible hardship she offers him the House of Conrad on her own terms, America does a great many things to Conrad and his

family that he had not counted on in his earlier plans.

The lives of the three generations of Conrads—Gottfried himself, his son Fred, and finally Ruth and Robert, Fred's children—are portrayed with indescribable poignancy. There is no affectation of style here—you hear merely a kindly human voice telling in simple words a narrative of lives as they really were.

THE HOUSE OF CONRAD. BY ELIAS TOBENKIN. Frederick A. Stokes Company. \$1.50.

"The Flame"

OLIVE WADSWORTH'S *The Flame* is the story of a girl of pagan passions and little knowledge of the world and of the unhappily married, blasé man to whom love is an outworn tale till he meets the slim, leaping flame that is Toni Saumarez; then comes a flight from convention to a suite of rooms in Paris; then Italy and unalloyed bliss until the tragedy falls. It is all interesting reading—at moments positively thrilling. No one between the ages of sixteen and thirty is likely to lay the novel down unfinished. The book is uncommonly well written, the characters are clearly limned; the first few chapters describing the dirty London slum in which Toni spends her early childhood are particularly well done.

The modern touch is evident; Toni has a career and is delightfully successful in it, until the longing for love again besets her and sends her into Italy again and into the arms of another lover. Poor Toni! She is never happy unless she is loving some one violently, and both of her love adventures turn out so unfortunately. We leave her, at last, fairly well disposed of—in the arms of the Count de Saulnes, who will give his life to teach her to love him.

THE FLAME. BY OLIVE WADSWORTH. Dodd, Mead & Co. \$1.40.

"The Key of the Fields and Boldero."

THE *Key of the Fields and Boldero*, by Henry Milner Rideout, is a book to which it is pleasant to turn from the racket of the world generally. In form it offers a novelty in that it contains two stories only, each of a length that somehow seems just right for the subject chosen but that fits in nowhere with the accepted style.

Mr. Rideout has suggested a means of escape to harassed authors from the tyranny of length. It would be quite natural for Mr. Rideout to do this, for he has his hand in at inventing ways of escape. He has to find a good many for his three delightful vagabonds in *The Key of the Fields*.

They get themselves into very tight places. They are Jackdabbs, young, agile and clever, who would work at many things and well, but is "too fond of the out of doors"; the surly smith, Puig, who loves the gay boy, although always tongue lashing him, and the mysterious giant, Barjavel, who turns out to be a prince after all, but a very modern prince, who detests binding conventions and runs away now and then to "become a man."

The three drift through the days in the sunshine of the southern shores of France with various exciting excursions into Italy. The whole would seem like a bit of the Middle Ages or the tale of some

Provençal singer were there not also a pretty and modern English girl who, with her brother and a small white donkey, is Stevensonizing through southern France.

How the expedition came to an untimely end and how the girl meets the vagabond artist the reader will want to find out for himself. Some readers will like best the lazy hours of song and philosophy by the wayside with the vagabonds.

The second story, *Boldero*, is full of action, too. Laid nominally in America in the years immediately preceding the war, this tale seems also to float in a haze of romance far away from the here and now.

The young hero in his proud rise to fortune finds himself a wanderer and hobo, then the protégé of a mysterious old Englishman in the Chinese quarter of a Southern city, then the comrade of Sikh soldiers in bloody adventures through mountain and forest trails, then finally the adopted son of an English lord.

THE KEY OF THE FIELDS AND BOLDERO. BY HENRY MILNER RIDEOUT. Duffield & Co. \$1.35.

"Eastern Red."

IN *Eastern Red*, by Helen Huntington, we are confronted by a problem novel of a new type. From the title one quite naturally anticipates the announcement of the dawn of a new and better era. But the light, which at moments seems to be about to illumine some not very comprehensible situations, never breaks through.

The story involves contrasting elements in the married lives of two women: Mrs. Harecourt, a member of exclusive New York circles, and Rose Durand, a vaudeville singer.

Mrs. Harecourt finds her husband disagreeable because he is fat, pink faced and his skin fits him too tightly, and also because he is a bit of a rounder. Ralph Aston appears on the scene, whereupon Mrs. Harecourt decides there must be a problem and wonders if Ralph is the solution; but just as something appears to be going to happen Mrs. Harecourt decides that divorce proceedings would involve altogether too much notoriety, so Aston sails back to France and out of her life.

Rose also gets it into her head that there must be a problem. "We are afraid!" thought Rose. "But what are we afraid of? The men—husbands? or each other? We don't trust each other—that's it!" But that wasn't really it—at least not all of it, adds the author, and the whole affair becomes more enigmatical than ever.

With feelings of mingled amazement and perplexity one closes the book, tempted with dear old Mother Katzenjammer to inquire: "Vot iss?"

EASTERN RED. BY HELEN HUNTINGTON. G. P. Putnam's Sons.

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